

NEWENT AND DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB



NEWSLETTER

MAY 2026

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

At the Club AGM on 28th April, on taking over from Mike as the new Chairman, I admitted to experiencing an element of 'imposter syndrome'. This is because I am very aware of the huge experience and many more years of membership of so many members of the Club. So, it is an extraordinary privilege to be chosen to be your new Chair which I hope I live up to.

The first challenge I have been set is from Mike to improve on his jokes. Some might say that is not a particularly difficult challenge to achieve (though I could not possibly comment). I do have the handicap of a former career in the law which is not necessarily a very fertile ground for humour though it sometimes has its moments which I may occasionally bring to you (subject to any trend in groan-o-meter readings).

I was on safer ground chairing the 'Call my Bluff' session at the AGM when two opposing teams of three members each offered the opposing team two false and one true definition of obscure words to disentangle. Whether true or false every skilfully argued definition was convincing. The result was an honourable draw, though had the teams comprised lawyers we would probably still be there with arguments over four times the number of definitions. Many thanks to Fraser for organising a fun and amusing session.

Many thanks to Mike for passing on a Club in robust health and to Kelvin for keeping all in such excellent order – there is a lot of busy paddling going on below the visible waterline. Thank you to John W for agreeing to support me as Vice-Chair with the prospect of him being another returning former Chair in 2027-2028 (oh no - another lawyer!!). And thank you to all those, Committee Members and the rest, who keep the fellowship the Club provides so vibrant.

Nigel

PUB LUNCH - TUESDAY 5 MAY

A new adventure for Probus, but fully tested! This hostelry is just round the corner from the confluence of the Wye and the Lugg, near Mordiford bridge, but wellies should not be necessary. The pub's name is appropriate given NASA's recent triumph, and there may or may not be a distant connection here with the Knights Templar. The pub is opening especially for Probus on this Tuesday so let's make it worth their while with a good turnout.

The Moon at Mordiford



**HR1 4LW
What 3 words
pound.postage.polka**

SPEAKER : TUESDAY 12 MAY 2026

JANET & NICK NELSON

“AN INTRODUCTION TO PHILATELY”

PHILATELY IS THE STUDY AND COLLECTION OF POSTAGE STAMPS, POSTAL HISTORY AND SELECTED ITEMS. IT IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR HOBBIES IN THE WORLD, COMBINING ASPECTS OF HISTORY, ART, GEOGRAPHY AND CULTURE.

SPEAKER: TUESDAY 26 MAY 2025

BRUCE WILLIAMSON

“Unusual Operations during the Cold War”

Unusual operations during the Cold War ranged from bizarre, failed spy plots to high-stakes technological gambles, reflecting the intense, often desperate, competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. These operations frequently utilised unconventional methods, including animal-based surveillance, psychological warfare and elaborate engineering projects to gain an advantage without triggering direct war.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT OUR COMMITTEE AND SUPPORTERS FOR 2026-27



Chairman: Nigel Johnson
Vice Chairman: John Weeden
Secretary: Kelvin Ashby
Treasurer: Mike Warbiurton
Programme Secretary: Fraser Gunn
Webmaster: Ray McCairn
Social Secretary: Stephen Wheeler
Committee member: Mike Townsend

Pub Lunches: Pual Dodd
Raffle Organiser: Chris Lathan
Newsletter Editor: Fraser Gunn
Technical Support: John Franklin
Technical Support: Mike Townsend
Technical Support: Paul Holyhead
Assistant Treasurer: Graham Baum

DEPEERAGE PACKAGE



Ninety-two hereditary Peers of the Realm are packing up their ermine and saying farewell to their traditional home from home. Liberal Democrats are pleased that Parliament has taken one more step towards the full reform of the House of Lords - although won't rest until a fully elected Upper House. But spare a thought for those departing peers. They are the product of families who have served this country for many hundreds of years, with many lifetimes of experience in scrutinising legislation. Many of them have been highly effective members and will be missed as individuals. Some will, no doubt, be returning as appointed life peers but the majority will just have to leave that exciting life behind them and go back to their mundane homes and families. We should acknowledge the contribution they have made to our country and help them to make the transition.

Liberal Democrats are proposing that departing hereditary peers should be offered a *Depeerage Package*. The exact contents are under debate but are expected to include the following:

- Free lifetime access to the bars and dining rooms in the Palace of Westminster
- Counselling services and yoga therapy for withdrawal symptoms
- Access to a specialist private care home if needed
- Severance lump sum calculated as two daily allowances for each year of service in the Lords.
- Dedicated 24-hour help line - at least for the first year.
- A farewell goodie bag containing Aromatherapy oils, Jaffa cakes and a House of Lords teddy bear.

If you have any suggestions for additional items, please tell us

We should not forget the families of the departing peers, who will have to listen patiently to endless complaints about issues going through the Lords. Each family member will be entitled to claim a pair of House of Lords ear muffs.

A "REELY" GOOD SHOW



My memories of going to the cinema, or "Flicks" as it was known, in wartime days, probably differs from most of you. In those entertainment starved days, queues to get in went halfway around the block and it was by no means certain that you would get in to see the film of your choice. As a last resort, the uniformed commissioner would circle the dispirited, often damp, queue and announce, in a Stentorian voice that there was * "Standing at 1/9s" [21 old pennies or today's 8p]

Once inside, the first thing you saw, or even smelled; was an almost impenetrable pall of smoke poised between the two floors as everyone smoked in those days, however, it was an escape from the reality of the terrible events that were happening elsewhere in the world.

It being some years since I had visited a cinema, I decided it was long overdue, but all of my boyhood haunts had long closed and had been transformed into Bingo halls or massage establishments. To start with what a contrast; the old fleapit had long gone. In its place stood something bewilderingly named establishment called a Multiplex.

Showing not a main feature, a "B" picture plus a newsreel and if you were lucky a "Look at Life"



No; I stopped counting when I reached double figures of the films on offer. Eventually locating the one I had come to see and there it was, on Screen number 5.

In vain I looked for a surly grim-faced cashier from whom I could buy my ticket.

To no avail; there was just a throng of blue denim clad youngsters circling the central plaza. Emboldened, I asked one of them where I might purchase at ticket.

A grunt, indicated "over there". Over there being an overloaded food stall containing a vast array of sweets whose sugar content must have exhausted the output of several sugar plantations, a selection of sausages and the accompanying bread rolls and of course, the inevitable huge tubs of multi coloured and multi flavoured popcorn.

I was told that nowadays [his emphasis] it was all automated and you pay by a machine in the foyer.

He relented when he saw the mixed look of hopelessness and bewilderment on my face and I waited while he served a strange looking youth who was purchasing, the biggest sausage that I had ever seen, which was accommodated, in an equally large bread roll, accompanied by liberal dashes of strange smelling condiments.

I asked of the cashier, who was by now approaching BF status, where that customer was headed. Out came a grunt which translated as “Cannadataprotection”, adding “why you wanna know?”

After explaining that I wanted to put the maximum distance between me and that monstrous sausage, he indicated a seat towards the rear, where upon I selected one near the front, reasoning that it would give me easy egress in case of emergency.



To enter the cinema, or rather Studio, is to enter a world of Stygian blackness. The inky dark only punctuated by the glowworm like lights of a thousand mobile phones as the owners frantically pressed assorted keys, nervous lest they miss a picture of an otherwise adorable kitten or the like. I nervously sat down, scared that I might inadvertently sit on some unsuspecting lap but no I was safe.



All around me I could hear the crunch of popcorn and smell the weird odours of fast food. No one seemed to be looking at the film other than me.

And so ended my first visit to a cinema in years. The name of the film, you ask? You know, I have forgotten!!

**For the benefit of younger readers, I had better translate that. When all the seats were taken, which was the rule, rather than the exception, at the rear of the cinema, between the entrance and the back row of seats, there was a limited amount of standing room at a reduced price. The idea was that as and when a seat became available, it was yours if you were quick enough. There was also the added benefit of being able to keep a watchful eye on the courting couples ensconced in the back seats but that is another story which does not belong here.*

Peter Hayes



A new teacher was trying to make use of her psychology courses. She started her class by saying, 'Everyone who thinks they're stupid, stand up!' After a few seconds, Little Larry stood up. The teacher said, 'Do you think you're stupid, Larry?' 'No, ma'am, but I hate to see you standing there all by yourself!'



5 WAYS FOR A MAN TO BE COMPLETELY HAPPY

1. Be with a woman who makes you laugh
2. Be with a woman who gives you her time
3. Be with a woman who takes care of you
4. Be with a woman who really loves you
5. Finally, make sure these four women don't know each other!

BBC NORFOLK QUIZ

Stewart White: Who had a worldwide hit with What A Wonderful World?

Contestant: I don't know.

White: I'll give you some clues. What do you call the part between your hand and your elbow?

Contestant: Arm.

White: Correct. And if you're not weak, you're...?

Contestant: Strong.

White: Correct - and what was Lord Mountbatten's first name?

Contestant: Louis.

White: Well, there we are then. So, who had a worldwide hit with the song "What A Wonderful World?"

Contestant: Frank Sinatra?

UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE (BBC2)

Jeremy Paxman: What is another name for "cherry pickers" and "cheesemongers"?

Contestant: Homosexuals.

Paxman: No. They're regiments in the British Army who will be very upset with you.



There's nothing worse than a Doctor's Receptionist who insists you tell her what is wrong with you, in a room full of other patients.

I know most of us have experienced this and I love the way this old guy handled it.

A 75-year-old man walked into a crowded waiting room and approached the desk.

The Receptionist said, 'Yes sir, what are you seeing the Doctor for today?'

'There's something wrong with my dick', he replied.

The receptionist became irritated and said, 'You shouldn't come into a crowded waiting room and say things like that.'

'Why not, you asked me what was wrong and I told you, He said.

The Receptionist replied; 'Now you've caused some embarrassment in this room full of people.

You should have said there is something wrong with your ear or something and discussed the problem further with the Doctor in private.'

The man replied, 'You shouldn't ask people questions in a roomful of strangers if the answer could embarrass anyone'.

The man walked out, waited several minutes, and then re-entered.

The Receptionist smiled smugly and asked, 'Yes??'

'There's something wrong with my ear,' he stated.

The Receptionist nodded approvingly and smiled, knowing he had taken her advice.

'And what is wrong with your ear, Sir?'

'I can't pee out of it,' he replied.

The waiting room erupted in laughter.

UNDERSTANDING HERALDRY

A most interesting, illustrated talk was delivered this morning to the members of the Newent Probus Club by John Bromley, an amateur historian of heraldry and keen metal detectorist.

The talk centered on the development of heraldry from several thousand years before the founding of Rome to its significance in various forms since. The term is derived from the Herald, one of the most important men at court, either regal or baronial who was required to recognise other nobles by their coats of arms. Trajan's Column in Rome illustrates the importance of standard bearers, also known as the 'Eagle'. The Holy Roman Emperor Charlamagne or Karl der Grosse expanded the use of Hilderic imaginary in the 8th century, as did Duke William of Normandy after 1066 adopting a lion rampant as the royal emblem, but it was Richard I who added two extra lions. Until the reign of King James, I the royal crest consisted of the three lions of England quartered with the fleur de lisle of France, but with the merging of England and Scotland when King James VI of Scotland became James I of England the red lion rampant with red border on a yellow field was added. Facial recognition became impossible with the adoption of full-faced armour in the 12th century, so the design of helmet crest, shield and surcoat became the only way of recognizing friend or foe.

The term 'livery' comes from living in, employees who lived in their lord's castle or home, and were dressed in a household uniform or livery. We were also informed as to the construction of a coat of arms, the blazoning, divisions, chargers and the Rules of Tincture and cadency, the latter being the device by which a son could use his father's shield design without usurping his father's authority.

Quartering was explained whereby the spouses to a marriage alliance, provided the wife came from a similar illustrious family, would have her family's arms added to her husband's shield always on the right-hand side. With a first quartering the situation would be simple, just two families, say a wheatsheaf on one side and a dragon on the other. It becomes more complicated with every additional quartering. The composition of a coat of arms was also explained, the crest on the top of the helmet, the helmet itself and its positioning illustrated the noble rank, a helmet facing forwards with bars across the opening, the sovereign, facing left or right closed or open, the rank in descending order from duke, marquess, earl, viscount to baron and last a baronet.

John discussed his collection of ancient and less ancient objects found in fields with the aid of a metal detector, some neolithic or new stone age, parts of a flint knife and other objects, roman artifacts, medieval coins, a Queen Mary groat (four pence in pre decimal currency) and of more recent origin a Royal Artillery cap badge in immaculate condition.

A brilliant talk appreciated by all.

Dorian Osborne

Famous Knights of Yore

The One who always gave up – Sir Render

The one who drank too much – Sir Rhosis of Liver

The dancing Knight – Sir Prance A lot

The one who is very weird – Sir Real

The one who is always sure of himself – Sir Tainly

The most well-rounded Knight – Sir Cumference

Exercising

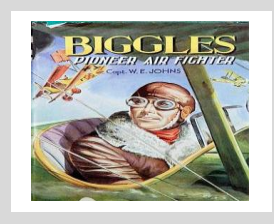


Overwhelmed by the apparent lack of members' responses to my list of moans in a previous issue of the Newsletter. I thought I'd try a different tack and produce a column on EXERCISE. You know the sort of thing? Wiggling your toes a bit while recumbent in that favourite armchair? Or something like indoor bowls (no offence to any closet indoor bowlers).

Although I've always been dimly aware that exercise is meant to be a Good Thing, for much of my childhood I hated it, apart from cycling which for most kids was de rigueur with no helmets. I went to (ever so slightly) posh schools and so have never attempted to play football, unless you count a kickabout with grandchildren, and so have been spared from an unhealthy obsession with the National Game.

My father took me once to stand on the terraces at Molineux where he had a Wolves season ticket and I was thoroughly miserable and bored. I did though have to endure a muddy field for rugby because no-one issued sick notes back then.

I would spend this time counting the minutes and keeping as far as possible away from the ball and any contact that might hurt.



I was always one of the last to be "picked for a side" anyway, as a known wimp who would much rather have spent the afternoon with his head into a Jennings or Biggles novel.

Cricket was no better, although generally warmer and you got to wear long trousers. Always last to bat, I just lost the wicket as fast as possible by stepping away from the terrifying mass thrown at me by a bowler who probably hated the sight of me. But you sometimes got nice teas and a bit of a tan.

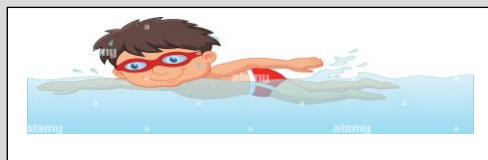
I found my element in water. Generally speaking, swimmers don't get hurt, although recently plodding up and down in Ross pool I did receive an accidental elbowing by someone in the next lane, who thought the breast stroke meant making the same gestures as you might need appropriately to welcome the sunrise at the solstice.

I expect that like me, whoever it was couldn't see for toffee with spectacles removed.

I survive by being able to see the bottom of the pool clearly with the aid of goggles;

with these on, despite my glaucoma I can see brief flashes of bikini clad svelte young things

in the fast lane who are at the other end before I've worked out where the other end actually is.



Even Map Reading

In my teens, and still at said semi-posh school, I encountered rowing, which I took to like – er – a duck takes to water, except that there is of course a floaty thing keeping you clear of it. The only real risk here is “catching a crab” – jargon for sticking the oar in too deep and being swept ignominiously out of the boat. When I stroked an eight (no giggles please) I dare say the crew wouldn't have minded if I had in fact been deboarded, as punishment for the cox and me raising the stroke rate to above 28. I had to give up rowing eventually because I had damaged my back with bad technique (no – I insist on no giggling please). It is a fact that at Henley some years ago a Russian oarsman was lifted out of the boat at right angles because his back had seized.



Skiing? My daughter, who learned as an adult, attempted to teach me once up in Arctic Norway, but all I did was fall over, much to the highly expert family's merriment. But I did try. Walking – generally fine as well if well equipped, mostly in the Lakes and Black Mountains. So, no I don't reckon I'm lazy.

While we had dogs, of course, there's no alternative to decent daily walking, although in bad weather some dogs are keener than others. I calculated that with our dogs, I walked an equivalent distance to crossing America from the East coast to West.

Hence those two steel knees which don't make any friends at airport security, and are a great excuse to get on snow scooters rather than skis.

So, you certainly mustn't overdo this exercise thing. Wearing out is better than rusting, my mother used to say.

So whatever movements you are still able to make despite all those joints, tablets, gesturing at the TV, lifting booze etc – just make as many as you can for as long as you can.

The Bromsash Warrior



NOT THAT DUKE OF YORK

Nestled at the foot of the southern end of the Malvern Hills at Berrow, the Duke of York pub is a classy country pub, catering to locals and tourists alike, where hostess Lizzie and her team welcome you to this traditional country Inn. To my knowledge, this is the fourth time we have visited the "Duke" for our monthly pub lunch and it seems to get better each time.

There is a TV programme called "The Hotel Inspector" in which Alex Polizza, a scion of the Forte family of hoteliers, visits struggling hotels or similar, in the space of an hour, restores it to profitability. Apart from being, at least to me, the most irritating woman on TV, which I admit is a crowded and competitive contest. One of her habits is to take a look at the menu and declare there is much too much choice.

She would have a field day at the Duke of York, which accidentally, the naming which must have been a good idea at the time, where the list of dishes on offer makes choice difficult but enjoyable experience. When the chosen one arrives thinking "Oh I wish I had ordered whatever".

The wide-ranging menu has all the usual and more pub classics but with a slightly added a bit of difference, a sauce here and an out of season vegetables.

Although numbers were down slightly, due no doubt as it was a Bank Holiday week, many of our members being away on holiday, there was still a respectable Twenty-Four of us. Just enough for the waiting staff to cope with. An enjoyable time was had by all.



There was a sad note to the proceedings though, when we said goodbye to Peter Hines after 25 years with the Club. Mike gave a short address paying tribute to Peter's long service and his contribution during his membership. He presented Peter with a Certificate of Long Service and the good wishes of all as Peter starts his new life at Alcester, near Stratford upon Avon.

He said that he had enjoyed his time and especially the friendship and camaraderie as member of Newent & District Probus and he will continue being a Probian and he intends to join one of the nearby clubs.

If, for some unaccountable reason, you have never attended one of our lunches, why not resolve to do the next one? No great mystique involved- just wait for Kelvin's announcement for the next one, give your name and menu choice to the organiser and turn up and enjoy"

"The Galloping Gourmet"

I was sat at the bottom of the garden a week ago, smoking a reflective cheroot, thinking about this and that -mostly about that and just happened to glance at the night sky and marvelled at the millions of stars glistening like pieces of quicksilver thrown carelessly onto black velvet.

In awe I watched the waxen moon ride across the zenith of the heavens like an amber chariot towards the void of infinite space wherein the tethered bolts of Jupiter and Mars hang forever in their orbital majesty; as I looked at all this, I thought, "I must put a roof on this lavatory.

Les Dawson



Would any member like to receive my fortnightly copy of Private Eye- my long-standing recipient has passed to an even higher plane and I honestly believe that the content is too good to waste on a single reader (me). If you can't or don't believe all you read in the daily press, give the Eye a chance. You may never be the same again. Just give me a call and form an orderly queue

Peter Hayes



WHERE AM I ?

Invite from Linton Historical Society

Wednesday 6th May at Linton Village Hall, 7 for 7:30 pm

The Speaker will be Mike Burstow from Malvern Radar and Technology History Society

“HOW WORLD WAR II WAS WON FROM THE PLAYING FIELDS OF MALVERN”

Radar made a decisive contribution to the Allies finally winning this war, his talk describes the contribution made by the Telecommunication Research establishment (TRE) to winning some key battles, thanks to radar.

£5 at the door, includes light refreshments

It didn't go unnoticed at our AGM that the club has now former lawyers as
Chairman & Vice Chairman

They do tricks even I can't figure out. -Harry Houdini

If it weren't for the lawyers we wouldn't need them. -William Jennings Bryan

If there were no bad people, there would be no good lawyers. -Charles Dickens

Law school taught me one thing: how to take two situations that are exactly the same and show how they are different. -Hart Pomerantz

You get a reasonable doubt for a reasonable price. -Criminal lawyer saying

It is the trade of lawyers to question everything, yield nothing, and talk by the hour. -Thomas Jefferson

I decided law was the exact opposite of sex; even when it was good, it was lousy. -Mortimer Zuckerman

Whenever you wish to do anything against the law, Cicely, always consult a good solicitor first. - George Bernard Shaw

The judge is found guilty when a criminal is acquitted. - Publilius Syrus

I would be loath to speak ill of any person who I do not know deserves it, but I am afraid he is an attorney - Samuel Johnson

The minute you read something that you can't understand, you can almost be sure that it was drawn up by a lawyer. -Will Rogers

Anon

**Thanks to all those who
submitted articles and assisted
with production.**

Ed



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